

RUSSIA AND THE WEST IN IRAN

and Russian, began to appear in December, 1944. The Soviet Hospital was generous in distributing necessary vaccines to the population in case of epidemics.

The Red Army, although in principle assigned to technical and security tasks, proved to be an instrument of propaganda as well. In the main, unless political circumstances dictated otherwise, its behavior was correct. This was especially true of the Teheran area.

Soviet privates were rarely granted passes to the city, and whenever they appeared in Teheran, they behaved quietly. They seldom walked alone, but usually appeared in small groups. They did not indulge in drinking and did not molest the population. Their conduct

thus contrasted with the British and American soldiers, who freely mingled with the population, bought souvenirs in antique shops, frequented restaurants and night clubs, and enjoyed their liquors. In some individual cases Western soldiers, unaccustomed to the strong effects of the local vodka, committed acts that brought no credit to their armies. Such conduct would invariably serve as an excuse for a slanderous whispering campaign, inspired no doubt by Soviet sources, with a view to blackening the Western reputation. And although the

Western soldiers were not altogether disliked by the populace and merchants, yet pro-Soviet newspapers had a strong point when they emphasized the good behavior and discipline of the Red Army. To the more discriminating Iranians these matters were not so simple.

They saw the contrast between the Red Army officer who was always smartly dressed and able to buy watches, furs, golden British sovereigns, and tsarist rubles and the Soviet private whose shabby uniform,

unhealthy pallor, and complete lack of money often made him a miserable and subdued figure.¹⁵ In contrast, American enlisted men looked free, healthy, and prosperous, and this, in turn, did not fail to impress the Orientals. Moreover it was common knowledge that Red Army discipline was maintained by exceedingly harsh methods, inconceivable in Western armies. Drastic penalties, including death sentences, were known to be applied to soldiers guilty of excess in

is The Soviet private's pay is 10.5 rubles per month; the second lieutenant receives 900 rubles. In Iranian currency the purchasing power of 10.5 rubles was about 3 tomans. A bottle of locally made beer cost 1.5 tomans in Teheran in war-time.

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